



Commander's COVID-19 update

CNFK Team,

In the ongoing battle this week against the spread of COVID-19 in the Republic of Korea and around the world, we were reminded that the actions of a very few can have outsized consequences—that the onus for taking an appropriate level of responsibility to stop the spread of the virus is one that belongs to each and every individual in the community. General Abrams declared a peninsula-wide public health emergency (PHE) Wednesday evening following a delay in reporting and communication by one contracted employee who tested positive for the virus following a period of activity aboard Camp Humphreys.

It is important to note that while General Abrams' decision to declare a PHE did not elevate the current health protection condition, change the preventive mitigation measures being taken, nor indicate of an increased level of risk, it does illustrate the critical importance of adhering to direction and guidance to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus.

In another measure, the Secretary of Defense enacted an updated 60-day stop movement for all service members, DoD civilians, and families overseas with a new projected completion date of May 25. This action builds upon previous movement restrictions governing foreign travel, permanent change of station, temporary duty, and personal leave to add deployments, redeployments, and global force management activities. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, effective Tuesday March 31, all Military Treatment Facilities and Dental Treatment Facilities will postpone most elective surgeries, invasive procedures, and dental procedures for 60 days. These actions will enhance staff safety, prolong the supply of PPE, and will repurpose the staff members at those facilities to better aid in the COVID-19 response.

Last night, USFK confirmed an eleventh positive COVID-19 case at Camp Humphreys and are conducting contact tracing and thorough cleaning on post there. Due to these ongoing efforts, Camp Humphreys is currently at minimum movement until that contact tracing is complete, and travel to Camp Humphreys is prohibited until further notice. Those personnel located at Camp Humphreys have been directed to minimize movement until further notice. An update will be provided once additional information is received.

Our service-wide priorities for confronting COVID-19 remain the protection of our people, maintaining mission readiness, and doing our part to support the whole-of-government effort. The only way we meet those priorities is by taking appropriate actions to protect ourselves, our co-workers and our families by employing the protective measures that have served us well so far: practicing good hand washing, social distancing, and taking appropriate actions when we feel we might be ill.

The US Navy continues to serve the nation around the world. Ships are sailing, planes are flying, and training is happening throughout the Department of Defense where possible to safeguard U.S. national interests and those of our allies and partners.

Stay vigilant at all times so we can continue to set the example as the best way to #protecttheforce, #preventthespread, and #killthevirus.

Sincerely,
Buzz

RDML Buzz Donnelly
Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea
#killthevirus

Q&A from the March 26 Facebook Live virtual town hall:

Q: What, exactly, is or isn't allowed under HPCON Charlie and the PHE for families/dependents?

A: The same restrictions that were already in place for Sailors and encouraged for family members/DOD civilians now formally apply for family members/DOD civilians. A more detailed list is being compiled and will be put out as soon as it is completed. Please refer to your Sailors and their chains of command in the meantime. If you have any specific items or questions, please have your Sailor ask their chains of command or send the questions to us at M-KO-CNFK-PAO@fe.navy.mil.

Q: Under the 30 days of PHE, if we're supposed to stay home, does that mean that family members will not be allowed at the schools when classes resume? And will the kids be allowed to ride the school bus or do we need to take them in a car?

A: Classes are scheduled to resume April 6. More guidance will be formulated as the situation evolves. We are working with the US Embassy and USFK, and we are awaiting key decisions from the Korean government as they have control over the school system. Private schools will also be making key decisions within government guidelines. The questions of school buses would be one of those key decisions for which we are awaiting answers.

Q: Some people think restaurants are off limits, some think they're only off limits at peak hours. Are hair salons, other stores in shopping centers, or open-air markets also off limits? Are all grocery stores OK, or is there an approved list? What about gas stations and banks out in town?

A: In regards to restaurants, dining in is NOT authorized at ANY time of day. Take out IS authorized. Pharmacies, grocery stores, and salons (for haircuts) are authorized as they are considered essential. No public transportation of ANY form (buses, trains, taxis, KTX/SRT) is authorized. Gas stations and banks are also deemed necessities and are therefore also authorized. More detailed guidance will follow as soon as it is completed.

Q: Can families still go to Chinhae and Humphreys, and what are the restrictions in place for entry on installations? Is POV still the only approved means of travel?

A: All DOD ID card holders are still allowed to access and utilize the facilities on all DOD bases with the exception of facilities in the Daegu area. If you are traveling to a military facility other than Chinhae, please contact your chain of command and create a plan that adheres to HPCON Charlie. POV is the only approved means of approval. No public transportation of any form (buses, trains, taxis, KTX/SRT) is authorized.

UPDATE 27 MARCH: Per USFK, Camp Humphreys is currently at minimum movement until contact tracing is complete for case 11. Do not travel to Camp Humphreys until further notice. Individuals in Camp Humphreys minimize movement until otherwise directed. An update will be provided once additional information is received.

Q: Gateway Inns in Chinhae told one of our dependents they are not approving rooms for leisure travelers. Is this also true on Humphreys?

A: At this time, Navy lodging is only available for mission-essential purposes. However, the Army and Air Force lodges have yet to implement this policy. If you are intending to travel to these facilities, please notify your chain of command and create a plan that adheres to HPCON Charlie. Please also call on the day of departure to confirm your reservations and that the policy has not changed.

Q: When you mentioned gyms, does that include the Busan base gym or the TRX box outside HQ? Also, for PT, is hiking allowed?

A: Any form of PT is still authorized and encouraged as long as you plan accordingly to make sure you follow HPCON C procedures. Stay away from crowds and apply social distancing. The base gym on the COMROKFLT base (where the main CNFK HQ building is located) is currently closed, but the gym at Pier 8 is open.

Q: The Army is getting special pay. Is the Navy getting any type of special pay?

A: The Army is NOT getting any special pay due to the general COVID-19 situation. There are special pays that are allotted on a case-by-case basis where there are unique situations that may be forced upon service members due to travel restrictions, quarantines, emergency leave or other situations or restrictions. If you are in a unique situation that is attributed to the coronavirus, please contact the N1 department or JAG to discuss the details of your situation, and we will see where we can help.